



United States Army Recruiting Battalion

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EDUCATORS VIEW FORT BENNING FROM THE INSIDE

MILWAUKEE – Several Wisconsin residents took a rare look at Army life during a recent tour to Fort Benning, Ga. Upper Iowa University's Center Coordinator Karen Ruskin and ten other educators learned first hand what it takes to go from civilian to soldier during the four-day trip sponsored by the Milwaukee Army Recruiting Battalion.

The purpose of the tour according to Lt. Col. John E. Angevine, commander of the Milwaukee Army Recruiting Battalion, is to educate the educator. "The tours are designed to provide educators with an inside view of Army life," explained Angevine. "It's a wonderful opportunity for educators to see a variety of training and educational benefits available to young adults in the Army. Participants can also interact with trainees and soldiers and ask pointed questions. The educators get a very accurate portrayal of the real Army."

The tour began in Milwaukee with a visit to the Military Entrance Processing Station. Here participants learned about the medical and job selection processes Army applicants complete. "We have a strict set of standards that our recruits must meet," said Angevine. "It's important for the educators to get a feel for the entire enlistment process."

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Once at Fort Benning, tour participants visited the reception station where recruits begin their transition from civilian to soldier. Tour participants watched as the Army's newest soldiers were issued uniforms, received their first "Army" haircut, and lined up for immunizations.

While the new recruits transformed, at least in appearance (It takes nine weeks to complete Basic Training), from civilian to soldier, the educators quickly realized Army basic training is not what they see in the movies.

"You could tell safety was a real concern," said Julianne Flores, Menominee (Mich.) High School. "When the trainees were going down the rappel tower for the first time the Drill Sergeants kept saying to the kids, 'The first thing I want you to do is look in my eyes. Don't do anything until you look in my eyes.' Even though I'm afraid of heights, I think they could have gotten me to go down that wall."

The remainder of the tour was full of adventure. The educators witnessed a variety of training to include rappelling, basic marksmanship and urban warfare. They had numerous opportunities to ask questions of trainees during lunch and a visit to a barracks. They learned of the many educational opportunities for soldiers and received a lesson in military history during a visit to the Fort Benning Infantry Museum. The educators even had an opportunity to sit in the pilot's seat of a Blackhawk helicopter.

The tour ended with an explosive "Rangers in Action Demonstration" where hundreds of spectators were thrilled by Army Rangers showcasing their skills and abilities. From C-4 explosions and hand-to-hand combat demonstrations to rappelling and helicopter extractions, the educators were treated to an exciting, informative glimpse into the life of Army Rangers.

"This tour was excellent," said Brad Piazza, UW-Parkside. "It was definitely an eye-opening and educational experience."

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